



State of Washington

## **DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND WILDLIFE**

Mailing Address: 600 Capitol Way N - Olympia, Washington 98501-1091 - (360) 902-2200, TDD (360) 902-2207  
Main Office location: Natural Resources Building - 1111 Washington Street SE - Olympia, WA

### **DETERMINATION OF NONSIGNIFICANCE (DNS)**

**Name of Proposal:** METHOW WILDLIFE AREA BEAR CREEK FOREST HABITAT RESTORATION PROJECT

**Description of Proposal:**

The proposal will:

- Use hand felling to reduce the density of small diameter Ponderosa Pine stands from their current 400 to 1,500 trees per acre to 30 to 50 trees per acre. Stand reconstruction sampling indicates that historic Ponderosa Pine density in the project area was approximately 11 to 30 trees per acre. At present there are essentially 2 cohorts of Ponderosa Pine trees, pre (> 125 yrs., i.e. old growth) and post fire suppression (most 70 to 90 yrs). We will retain 100% of the pre-fire suppression trees and snags, and enough of the largest and most likely to survive of the post-fire suppression trees to meet our target density, including snags. Our sampling indicates that 25% to as high as 42% of the trees in these stands are dead as a result of Pine Beetle attacks and the remainder of the trees, including relic old growth, are at risk of further beetle attacks and catastrophic fire.
- The project will use thinning prescriptions based on the predetermined ecological site potential to reduce hazard from fire and insect damage, and improve wildlife habitat.
- Remove encroaching Ponderosa Pine trees from declining aspen stands (Aspen stands have been designated a priority habitat by the WDFW). Will improve vigor of remnant aspen trees and favor recovering aspen stands to their pre-fire suppression era extent.
- The project area is approximately 80 acres in 2 sections.
- Thinning slash will be piled in approximately 4'x4'x4' piles and burned in the late fall following harvest.
- Incorporate thermal cover and hiding patches for wildlife into prescriptions and create additional snags for cavity nesters.
- All trees will be felled by hand and skidded with a tracked cable skidder.
- To the greatest degree possible operations will be conducted on frozen ground with a snow pack of at least 12" to minimize soil compaction and surface disturbance.
- No new road construction, but some closed/abandoned roads will be temporarily re-opened.
- In conjunction with USFS, WDNR, Okanogan Fire District 6 and other agencies, conduct controlled broadcast burns to reduce fire hazard and improve regeneration of fire dependent species for browse. Burns would only be conducted if sufficient additional resources are available from the above mentioned agencies or outside funding sources
- Controlled burns would be contained by various control lines including hand-lines and existing roads and ignited by hand.
- Plant native grasses and shrubs in areas impacted by the project to reduce encroaching

- weeds.
- Monitor and evaluate progress and effectiveness of treatments with photo-monitoring and vegetative cover/density plots.
  - Use signs and guided field trips to illustrate sustainable environmental benefits to the public.

**Proponent/Applicant:**

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife  
Thomas McCoy  
350 Bear Creek Road  
Winthrop, WA 98862

**Location of Proposal, including street, if any:** Bear Creek Wildlife Area, Winthrop  
Washington, Okanogan County; Section 31 and 32, Township 35 North, Range 22 East WM

**Lead Agency:** Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW)

WDFW has determined that this proposal will likely not have a significant adverse impact on the environment. Therefore, state law<sup>1</sup> does not require an environmental impact statement (EIS). WDFW made this determination of nonsignificance (DNS) after we reviewed the environmental checklist and other information on file with us.

We issued this DNS according to state rules.<sup>2</sup> We will **not act on this proposal for 14 days** from the date we issued the DNS. Agencies, affected tribes, and members of the public are invited to comment on this proposal or DNS. We must receive your comments within 14 days of the date of this letter. This means we must receive your comments by **January 25, 2010**

You can submit your comments by email to [SEPAdesk@dfw.wa.gov](mailto:SEPAdesk@dfw.wa.gov), through the WDFW SEPA website comment link at <http://www.wdfw.wa.gov/hab/sepa/sepa.htm>, fax to (360) 902-2946, or mail to the address below. When you send us your comments, please provide the name of the proposal in your comment letter.

**Responsible Official:** Teresa A. Eturaspe

**Position/Title:** SEPA/NEPA Coordinator, WDFW Regulatory Services Section

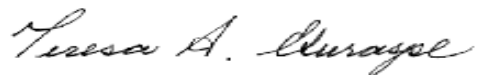
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After the comment period closes, applicants may view the updated status of this proposal on the WDFW SEPA website: <http://www.wdfw.wa.gov/hab/sepa/sepa.htm>. Once the status is posted as final, applicants and permittees may take action on the proposal. When a proposal is modified or withdrawn, notice will be given in accordance with state law.<sup>1</sup>

If you have questions about this DNS or the details of the proposal, contact Teresa Eturaspe at the address, e-mail, or fax number above; you can also call her at (360) 902-2575.

**DATE OF ISSUE:** January 11, 2010

**SIGNATURE:**



Footnotes

1. RCW 43.21C.030(2)(c)
2. WAC 197-11-340(2).